

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TIJUAN 00428 290014Z
ACTION SCS-06

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 OES-07 /028 W
-----077242 292242Z /21

R 271738Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL TIJUANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2545
AMEMBASSY MEXICO

UNCLAS TIJUANA 0428

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, CDES (MARAVICH, PETE, DECEASED)(THOMAS JOSEPH B.,
DECEASED)

SUBJ: W/W - SINKING OF TUNA BOAT "LIBERTY BELL" JUNE 19

1. CONGEN FIRST LEARNED ABOUT SINKING OF TUNA BOAT "LIBERTY BELL" LATE IN AFTERNOON OF JUNE 19 WHEN INFORMED BY EMBASSY SCIENCE ATTACHED, MR. ROLF JUHL. ACCORDING TO MR. JUHL, SINKING OCCURRED BETWEEN 2:00 A.M. AND 3:00 A.M. JUNE 19.

2. CONOFF IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED TUNA BOAT ASSOCIATION IN SAN DIEGO AND WAS INFORMED THAT SHIP OWNED BY PAN PACIFIC FISHERIES, SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA. OFFICIAL OF COMPANY, MR. TONY TRUTANICH, WAS THEN CALLED. HE TOLD CONOFF THAT HE HEARD TWO PEOPLE DIED AND NINE SURVIVED ACCIDENT. HE REQUESTED CONGEN'S ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION OF NAMES OF TWO VICTIMS. COMPANY PLANNED SEND CHARTER AIRCRAFT TO CIUDAD CONSTITUCION ON JUNE 20 TO PICK UP SURVIVORS, AS WELL AS REMAINS OF TWO VICTIMS.

3. ON JUNE 20 STATE DISTRICT ATTORNEY, CIUDAD CONSTITUCION INFORMED CONOFF THAT BODIES OF TWO VICTIMS BROUGHT TO CIUDAD CONSTITUCION AND THAT NINE SURVIVORS IN SAN CARLOS, SOME 30 KILOMETERS AWAY. HE GAVE NAMES OF TWO VICTIMS AS PETE MARAVICH, MASTER OF THE SHIP, AND JOSEPH B. THOMAS, CHIEF ENGINEER, CONOFF RELAYED NAMES TO MR. TRUTANICH.

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4. ON MORNING OF JUNE 20 AIRCRAFT CHARTERED BY PAN-PACIFIC FISHERIES FLEW TO CIUDAD CONSTITUCION ACCOMPANIED BY CONGEN EMPLOYEE, JOSE VAZQUEZ, TO PICK UP SURVIVORS AND BODIES. CAPTAIN OF PLANE INFORMED VAZQUEZ THAT FLIGHT HAD TO LEAVE CIUDAD CONSTITUCION BY 3:30 P.M. AS PLANE DID NOT HAVE NIGHT FLYING INSTRUMENTS.

5. IN CIUDAD CONSTITUCION VAZQUEZ LEARNED THAT BODIES OF TWO VICTIMS ALREADY TRANSPORTED TO MORTUARY IN LA PAZ AND PAPERWORK FOR NINE SURVIVORS HAD NOT YET BEEN COMPLETED. AS RESULT HIS INTERVENTION WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES, NINE WERE ABLE TO LEAVE AT 3:30 P.M., ARRIVING IN TIJUANA AT APPROXIMATELY 7:00 P.M. VAZQUEZ ALSO ASSISTED CREW OF PLANE, AS WELL AS SURVIVORS, IN CLEARING MEXICAN IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS. PLANE THEN DEPARTED FOR SAN DIEGO, ARRIVING THERE AT APPROXIMATELY 9:00 P.M.

5. OF NINE SURVIVORS, SEVEN WERE U.S. PERMANENT RESIDENT ALIENS AND TWO U.S. CITIZENS. CONOFF GAVE THEIR NAMES TO INS AFTERNOON JUNE 20 IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THEIR ENTRY INTO U.S.

6. ACCORDING TO LA PAZ MORTUARY, IT UNABLE OBTAIN PERMISSION TRANSPORT REMAINS BY AIR. BODIES RETURNED TO U.S. BY LAND, ARRIVING IN SAN DIEGO JUNE 23.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TIJUAN00428
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780269-0984
Format: TEL
From: TIJUANA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780614/aaaaamcy.tel
Line Count: 79
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION SCS
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2187127
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: W/W - SINKING OF TUNA BOAT ("LIBERTY BELL") JUNE 19
TAGS: CASC, CDES, (MARAVICH, PETE), (THOMAS, JOSEPH B)
To: STATE MEXICO
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3264e57e-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014